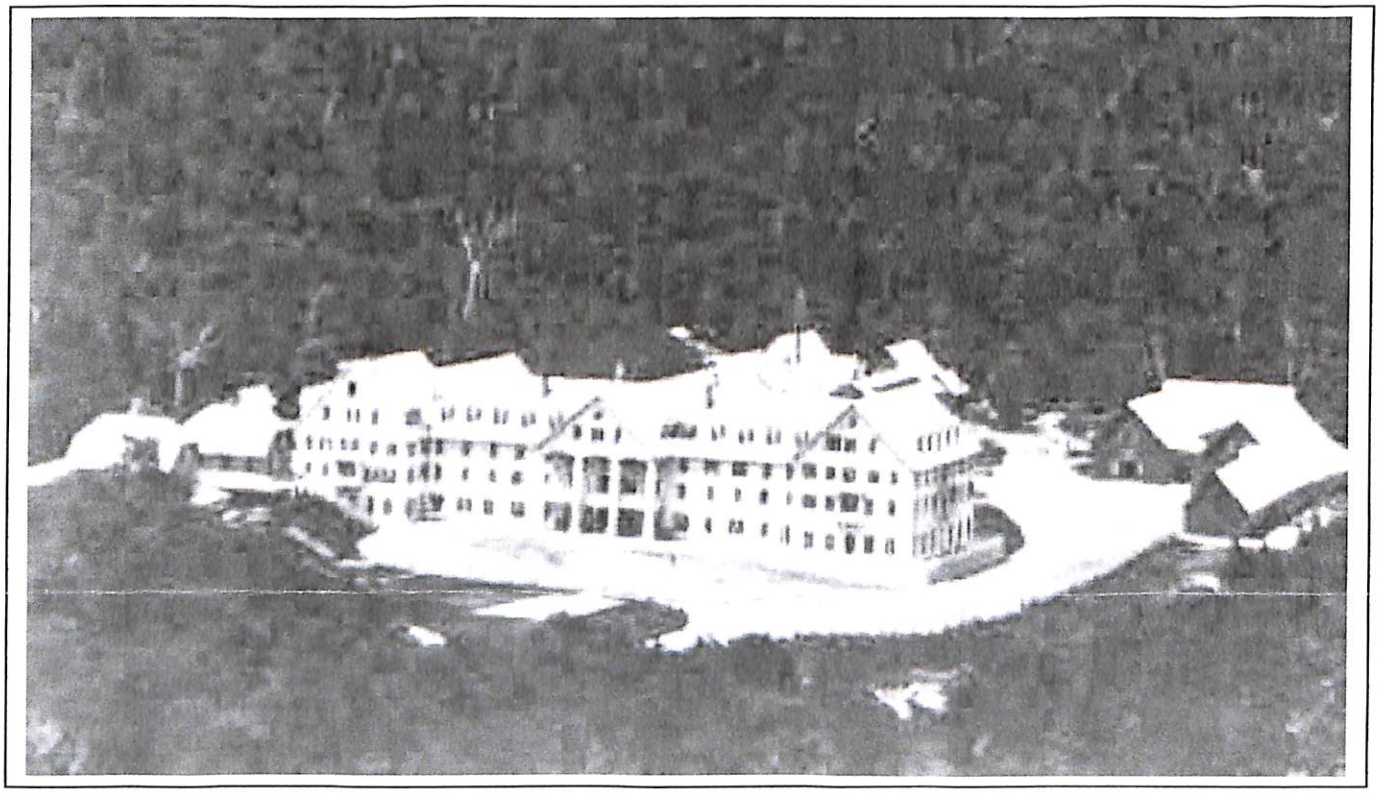
TAFT TALK

No. 56 *Newsletter of the Taft Family Association* **Jun 2009**



The Profile House 1860-1920s (Source: Families of Profile House, Mittersall and Franconia, NH

"Before Richard Taft arrived in the White Mountains, it was a pretty quiet place, even during the summer…." *

"Richard Taft, then landlord of the Washington House in Lowell, MA, had visited the Franconia Notch, was attracted by the loveliness and grandeur of its scenery, and with prophetic instinct saw the vast possibilities it afforded as a summer resort. In 1849 he became the proprietor of the Flume House, a small hotel built the previous year, and from this period dates his career as the most famous and successful of mountain landlords." For more on Richard and Lucinda Taft and the Profile House see pp. 8 and 9.

* *Source: Cow Hampshire: Franconia, NH Hotel Owner & Early Tourism Promoter: Richard Taft (1812-1881) by Janice Brown 8 Jun 2006*

ATTENTION – ATTENTION – ATTENTION

This is an alert from your president (and editor):

With the passing of Bert Smith, the Taft Family Association has been dealt another severe blow.

In the last few years we have lost significant contributors to this newsletter as well as to the executive committee. As the Taft Family Historian, Dick Messinger wrote this newsletter for many years and corresponded with hundreds of you. Virginia Goss, who passed away recently, was our past secretary. Emma Barrows is no longer able to aid us. These two ladies were integral to our successful reunions at the church in Mendon. Ill health is hampering our extraordinary historian and DNA guru, Neil Todd. (Get well quick, Neil, we miss you!)

We want YOU!!!!

We need executive committee members.

We need a president and a secretary.

We need someone to oversee the five-year reunions.

We need someone to create an official website and manage it.

We need YOU!!!

Berneta DeVries is retiring this year. Berneta is our juggler supreme – she has been our secretary/treasurer for several years. Berneta's the one you connect with for your dues and your questions (which she then doles out to the rest of us). She is also the only person still in the Mendon area and single-handedly organized our last reunion. I can't imagine why she wants to cut back! She doesn't act like any 80 year old that I know – or not many that's for sure. But then that is precisely what has happened to our association.

Berneta –

You go, girl!!

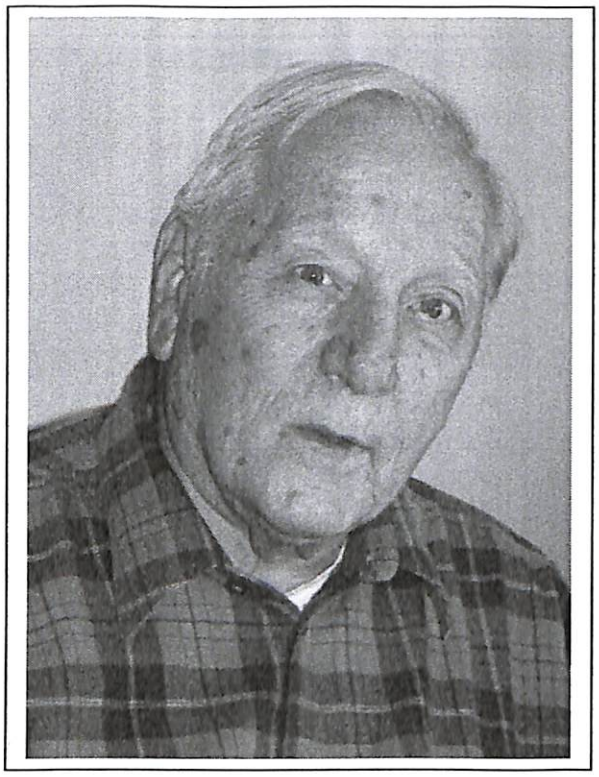
The officers have decided that we must cancel the Reunion this year. This would have been our 135th reunion, but the logistics are such that, coupled with our other Taft Family Association duties, we do not have enough people-power to expend in that area. We put out a call for new ideas to our members and have not heard from anyone yet. If you would like to get involved, please let us know (the contact information is on page 10).

At this point I will take on the treasurer duties but we need a new president and a secretary. We also need new executive committee members. If people cannot do this, and we recognize that everyone is pretty busy, we will have to reconsider the future of our association.

There are several ways we could go including being an online association. David Taft has been very active in adding our information to his website; however, if we continue as a viable organization, we need to create our own website and manage it (anyone inspired to be that webmaster?).

For now, look for the next newsletter. We will keep you informed on what has transpired and what is new!

Your president and editor, Pat Allen



Bertram Taft Smith (1929-2009)

Bertram Taft Smith

It is with great sadness that we must announce the passing of Bert Smith. Bert was known by many of us from Taft family Reunions. He had been a member of our executive committee for a number of years. He is probably even more well known (although you may not have known his name) as the guiding light in the study of Lorado Taft and indeed the entire Daniel Taft line. If you look back through the TTTs you will see several photos of paintings and sculpture that his grandfather had created and that Bert shared with us.

"Bert Smith, a long-time resident of Greensboro, NC died on 31 Mar 2009. He was born on 19 Feb 1929 to Dr. Raymond Alexander and Mary (Taft) Smith and grew up on the site of the David Caldwell Log College on Hobbs Road. He received a degree in Philosophy from Guilford College and a Master's Degree in Education from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He was a member of the West Market Street United Methodist Church.

"Bert taught English and Social Studies in the Greensboro City schools for 30 years. As a young man, Bert played the bass fiddle with the Mellotones, a popular dance band. He served as President of the Guilford County Young Democrats and worked in many campaigns for progressive North Carolina candidates. As a lifelong learner as well as a teacher, he was an accomplished craftsman and enjoyed creating handmade gifts.

"Bert was an advocate of the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, North Carolina, where he taught classes in blacksmithing and Shaker woodworking. He was a past editor of the North Carolina Artist Blacksmith Association newsletter.

"An enthusiastic musician, Bert played tuba in the Greensboro Concert Band, with which he rehearsed the night before he died. He also played occasionally with the Ardmore Moravian Band and with the group accompanying the Kirkwood July 4th parade. He was supportive of local music, arts and crafts, and historical organizations.

"Bert is survived by his wife, Jessie Taylor Smith; his daughter, Laura Smith-Martin of Winston-Salem; son, Mark David Smith of Dudley, Massachusetts; son, Dr. Robin Taft Smith of Asheville; daughter, Anna Baker Smith of Weaverville, California; stepsons, Louis Burch, Jr. of Greensboro and Taylor Burch of Newbury Park, California; his sister, Sylvia Forsmith of Carmel, New York, and seven grandchildren, Morgan Kerchner, Mary Katherine Smith, Ethan Smith, Sarahanne Smith, Andrew Martin, Taft Martin and Nicole Burch." *(Source: Obituary from the News-Record, Greensboro, NC)*

Bertram Taft Smith was the son of Raymond Alexander and Mary (Taft) Smith. Mary Taft was the daughter of Lorado Zadoc (Don Carlos, Zadok Lovell, Nathan, Daniel Jr., Daniel, Robert) Taft.

Jessie Taylor Smith, the widow of Bert Smith, wrote to let us know:

"Bert was passionate about keeping the legacy of his grandfather (Lorado Taft) alive. She noted that "The Letters of Lorado Taft 1880-1885" by Allen Weller was published in 1985. At the time of Allen's death in 1997 he had just completed a second manuscript to be called "Lorado Taft: The Chicago Years." This book documenting Taft's career and accomplishments is also an arts social history of Chicago. The manuscript remains in the hands of an editor and the University Press has agreed to publish the book. The Weller family and indeed the rest of Lorado Taft's family remain keenly interested in this publication." We look forward to seeing the completed work as well and know that Bert would have been pleased.

Compliments of ... *Edward E. Taft*

Becky Grothe sent in this drawing which she noted appears to be an ink drawing by Edward E. Taft. It was among items belonging to her husband's grandparents.

Edward E. Taft (1860-aft 1910) was a cousin of Lettie Taft Smith, her husband's grandmother.

Edward E. Taft was the son of Simon (Simeon) Fisher Taft (1832-1894) who was the son of George W. Taft (1802-1854) and Betsey Claflin (1803-)

Although we know that George W. Taft was part of the Booneville, Oneida, NY family, we have not been able to place him precisely. If anyone can substantiate his parental connection, let us know – it has been driving Neil crazy.

On the right side it says "Compliments of Edward E. Taft"

Blacksmithing from an early age

Donald Taft of Jefferson, OH reports that his grandfather, Loren Taft, born in 1869, was taken to Mendon by his dad Clark Corbin Taft and his great uncle Sam Taft in 1874 to learn to be a blacksmith at Caleb Taft's shop. He doesn't know whether they went to THE Reunion. Donald has seen Caleb Taft's tools and shop reproduction at the Ford Museum.

Loren Elmer Taft was the son of Clark Corbin (Adolphus, Timothy, Timothy, Jacob, Israel, Robert Jr, Robert) Taft.

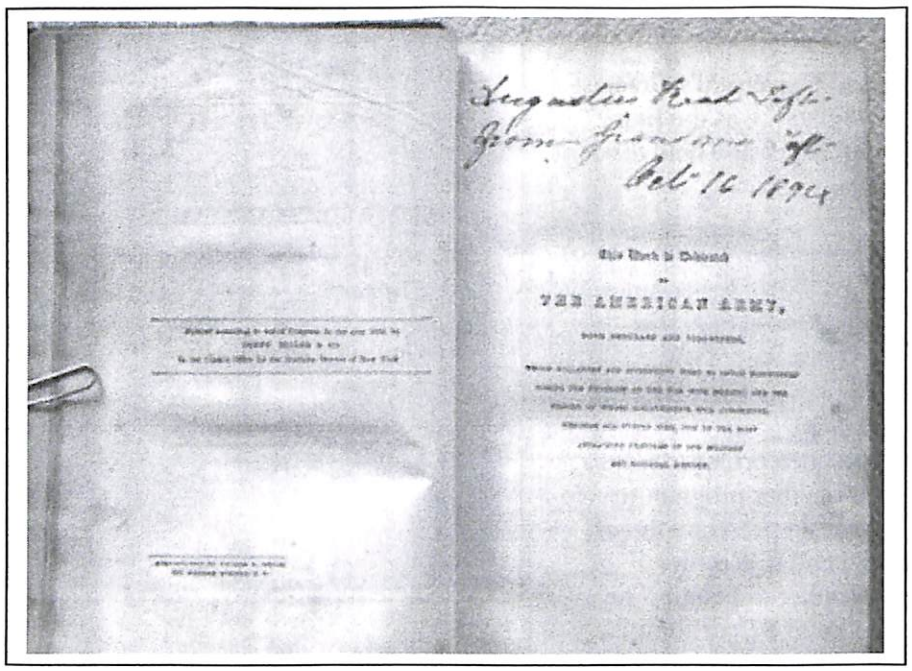
Many congratulations!

Linda R. Newberry reported that her husband retired from his electrician's job at Burlington, NE Northern Santa Fe Railroad in July 2008 – and they hope to do more traveling. Linda's business is DBA Family Books.

She also noted that their son, Lionel Taft Newberry and his wife Andrea "Amber" Businga have three children, the most recent addition was Carson Nicholas Newberry born 3 May 2008 in Scottsbluff, NE, He joins his siblings Aidan Taft Newberry born in 2004 and Gage Logan Newberry b in 2006.

Linda Rae (Savage) Newberry was the daughter of Lynn Marion Savage (Serrel Taft Savage, Heil Savage and Ruth Adelaide Taft, Serrel, Benedict, Mijamin, Nathan, Mijamin, Benjamin, Robert Taft).

We would love to hear from you – photos, stories, you name it, we are interested. And better yet how about writing an article for this newsletter – no financial reward but lots of good will!



Inside page from the "History of the War with Mexico from the Commencements of Hostilities to the Ratification of the Treaty of Peace" by John S. Jenkins published in 1851 by Auburn, Derby and Miller Publishing Co.

Inscription reads:

Augustus Read Taft
From Grandma Taft
Oct. 16, 1894

Four other pages show

1. Orry Taft (on three different pages)
2. Orry A. Taft, Jr. May 25 '59

It all began in 1851…

In the last issue of our newsletter (TTT #55 p. 4) we had an article about the Cornhill Coffee House and Orray A. Taft. This issue we again find the Orray Taft family in our spotlight. The website Café De La O run by "Randyman" had the following to say: "I have had this book in my possession for almost thirty years. My wife Jeri bought it for me at the old Pomona Gun Show at the Pomona Fairgrounds in 1979. It is in reasonably good shape considering it was published in 1851. It has some old style personalized handwriting in it that adds to its character (and this is where we come in). *(Source: http://cafedelao.blogspot.com/2007/11/history-of-war-with-mexico-john-s.html:*

See page 7 for information on the Orray Augustus Taft family).

In Memoriam

Constance P. Taft

Constance P. "Connie" (Lothrop) Taft, 92, of 10 Congress St., Greenfield, MA died Friday (4-3-09) at the Sunbridge Care and Rehabilitation Center in Hadley, MA.

She was born in Ayer, MA on 11 Apr 1916, the daughter of William and Margaret (Guthrie) Lothrop. She graduated from Greenfield High School in 1934. Connie was an avid golfer and was a former member of the Tekoa Country Club and the Country Club of Greenfield. Her husband, Russell E. Taft, predeceased her on 1 Nov 2002.
Survivors include a sister, Helen F. Putnam of Greenfield, and several nieces and nephews and grandnieces and nephews. She was predeceased by a brother, Paul Lothrop. *(Source: The Recorder, Greenfield, MA 4 Apr 2009)*

Russell Eugene Taft (1913-2002) was the s/o Robert Nickerson Oakman (Eugene Stratton, George Hubbard, Merrill, Lyman, Samuel, Israel, Robert Jr, Robert) Taft.

I Believe Harold

Harold Ernest Taft Jr., affectionately known as "The World's Greatest Weatherman" and "The Dean of TV Meteorologists", was the first television meteorologist west of the Mississippi River and held the post for a record 41 years.

Harold Taft joined the Army Air Corps during World War II, and went to the University of Chicago to study meteorology. He was a junior member of General Dwight D. Eisenhower's staff for D-Day. He graduated from Phillips University in 1946 and joined American Airlines as a staff meteorologist.

In 1949, Taft and two fellow American Airlines meteorologists, Bob Denney and Walter Porter, proposed a nightly weather program to WBAP-TV (now KXAS). "We told them we would present a three-dimensional look at the weather, and we would call it Weather Telefacts, because we wanted to explain the weather to people," he later said. Taft, as chief meteorologist (at the rate of $7 per show), premiered at 10:15 p.m. on October 31, 1949.

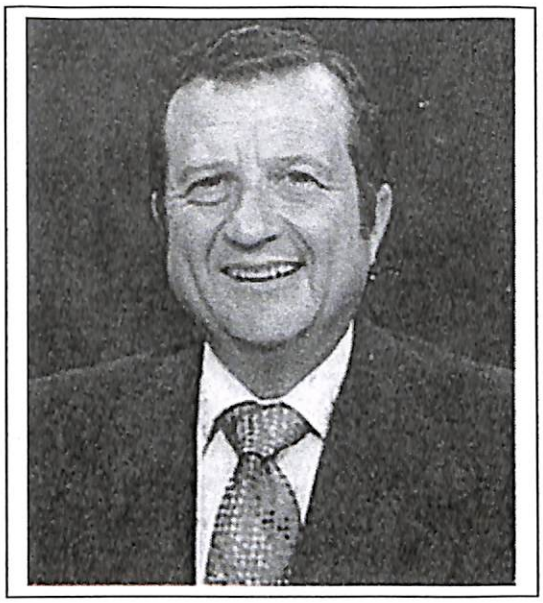
Harold's weather forecasts also aired on WBAP radio, where overnight personality Bill Mack nicknamed him "The World's Greatest Weatherman". Much in the style of Chicago weathercaster Tom Skilling, Taft resisted dumbing down his presentations, explaining complicated meteorological concepts in layman's terms where needed and enhancing charts with isobars and upper-level diagrams. This was occasionally a source of conflict with KXAS producers.

When new management at KXAS planned to replace Taft in the early 1980s, a grassroots campaign bombarded the station with complaints. Bumper stickers proclaiming "I Believe Harold" began appearing and advertisers threatened to pull their business. Management relented, and Taft remained a permanent part of KXAS' news programs.

In the late 1980s, Taft, diagnosed with cancer which left him frail, presented a series of reports on his health problems. In spite of the hardships, Taft continued to forecast the weather when he was able. Taft was posthumously presented the Award for Outstanding Service by a Broadcasting Meteorologist by the American Meteorological Society. He received the award "in recognition of his warmth as a broadcaster and his professionalism as a forecaster."

Taft served as a colonel in the Texas Air National Guard, and he was often referred to as "Colonel Taft" on the air, especially through the 1970s. In 1975, Taft was co-author of the book "Texas Weather" with fellow KXAS meteorologist Ron Godbey. In 1985, Taft testified as an expert witness on wind shear, which he identified as the cause of the crash of Delta Air Lines Flight 191 on August 2, 1985 at Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport.

(Information from wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Taft: and Find A Grave recorded by Gardee Hill)



Harold Ernest Taft Jr

Harold Taft was born 5 Sep 1922 in Enid, OK, the son of Harold Ernest and Nellie (Cowles) Taft, died 28 Sep 1991, and was buried in Shannon Rose Hill Memorial Park, Ft Worth, TX.

A devout Lutheran, Taft had been a regular cornet player at St. John Lutheran Church in Grand Prairie and King of Glory Lutheran Church in Fort Worth. His funeral service had to be moved to St. Stephen's Presbyterian Church, one of Fort Worth's largest churches, to accommodate the crowd of mourners and a live KXAS broadcast.

Harold Ernest Taft was the son of Harold Ernest (Orlando David, George Wheaton, Peter, Cpl. Henry, Capt. Peter, Joseph, Robert) Taft.

Please note that if your label reads 2004-05, you will no longer receive this newsletter. Please contact our treasurer right away, so you don't miss the next newsletter this fall. If your year is 2012 or later, don't send any more in at this time. Thank you.

The Taft Hotel in Winthrop, MA

In 1830 Taft built his famous Taft's Hotel and Restaurant where Maryland, Townsend and Otis Sts. are now. Following a fire in 1851 the main structure was rebuilt and the business flourished until 1889 when the remaining buildings were used as The Point Shirley Club.

(Source: The Winthrop Improvement and Historical Association)

From 1851 to 2009, 158 years later, the continuing story of the War With Mexico... or at least the Taft part in it (from page 5)

Orray "Orry" Augustus Taft was born 15 May 1817 in West Roxbury, Suffolk, MA, the son of Read and Mary (Shurtleff) Taft, and died 8 Mar 1893 in Boston, Suffolk, MA (VRMA 438.99). Orray Augustus Taft married 19 Apr 1840 in Roxbury, MA Elizabeth WHITE (VR 2.390 int).

1. Orray Augustus Taft, who signed the book in three places, built the Taft Hotel and Restaurant on Point Shirley in Winthrop in 1830 and continued the business until 1889. He died at the Copley Square Hotel in 1893, having spent the winter there. His father, Read Taft, had been an innkeeper in Roxbury, having a tavern, built about 1805, in the southernmost point of South Street, where it touched Washington St., near Roslindale. After Read Taft died it became the Union Hotel.

Orray Augustus Taft, Jr., son of Orray Augustus (1817), was born 26 Jun 1841 at the Cornhill Coffee House*, run by his uncle Charles Murdock Taft, in Boston, MA, died 12 Feb 1889 in Mass. Hospital, Boston, MA, aged 47/7/16, a suicide (VRMA 402.49), and was buried in the Milton Burial Ground. Orray Augustus Taft married 24 Apr 1879 in Boston, MA Lydia Bowman (BAKER) EDWARDS (VR 309.43). Lydia Bowman Baker was born 11 Nov 1848 in Dorchester, Suffolk, MA (VRMA 36.25), the daughter of Edmund and Lydia B. Baker, and died 23 Jan 1937 in Portland, ME. Lydia Bowman Baker married first 11? Oct 1867 in Dorchester, MA John H. Edwards (VRMA 200.307). He was born in1843 in Philadelphia, PA, the son of George M and Elizabeth.

2. Orray Augustus Taft, Jr., who signed the book, attended the Chauncy Hall School and completed his education at the Middleboro Academy. He became a clerk for the Thomas Liversidge starch manufacturer in Milton and later went into business for himself as a manufacturer of gums and starch with offices in Providence, RI and Boston, MA. He was a lieutenant in the state militia and was a member of the Masonic Fraternity, Union Lodge of Dorchester from 1865-1872 and the Boston Commandery Knights Templars of Boston.

George S. Taft, son of Orray Augustus (1817), was born in 1858 probably in Winthrop, Suffolk, MA and died 19 Sep 1884 in Winthrop, MA (VRMA 357.368). George Taft married 1 Oct 1878 in Boston, MA Cora M. MAYO (VRMA 300.177). Cora M. Mayo was born 18 Jul 1854 in Chatham, MA (VRMA 81.13), the daughter of David E and Hannah Mayo, and died after 1930 perhaps in Arlington, Middlesex, MA. Their son, Augustus Read / Read Augustus was born 22 Feb 1880 in Boston, MA (VRMA 315.96) and married 14 Feb 1906 in Boston, Suffolk, MA Gladys A. RANDALL (VRMA 565.325). Gladys A. Randall was born in 1882 in CAN, the daughter of Thomas and Laura J. (Hollingworth) Randall. George S. Taft was a printer.

3. Augustus Read Taft, who received the book from his grandmother, Elizabeth (White) Taft, in 1894. In the 1880 Census he was in his grandparents' household, listed as Reed A. Orray A. was listed as a hotel proprietor and George S. was listed as a printer. In the 1910 Census for Chelsea he was listed as a book-keeper for a rubber factory and in 1920 he was the manager of the factory.

(History of the Military Company of the Massachusetts, Now Called the Ancient ... By Oliver Ayer Roberts; The Town of Roxbury ... by Francis S. Drake; 1905 p. 441)

*See Taft Tree Talk #55 (Nov 2008) p. 4 for an interesting event at the Cornhill Coffee House.

Richard Taft – Mountain Landlord (cont. from p. 1)

Richard Taft was born 14 Mar 1812 in Barre, Washington, VT, the son of Abisha and Polly (Bliss) Taft, and died 14 Feb 1881. He married 23 May 1839 Lucinda KNIGHT. Lucinda Knight was born 5 Sep 1817 in Hancock, Hillsborough, NH, the daughter of Aaron and Rebecca (Adams) Knight, and died 18 Oct 1895 at the Hotel Vendome, Boston, Suffolk, MA (VRMA 456.417). Richard Taft was the son of Abisha (Cpl. Henry, Capt. Peter, Joseph, Robert) Taft.

"From boyhood he had to make his own way in the world, and when but nine years of age, he went to Alstead, NH where he was employed for nine years on a farm, his educational advantages being limited to the usual winter term of the district school. He began hotel life as an employee in a tavern at North Chelmsford, MA in 1830. Two years later he became one of the proprietors, a relation which lasted three years, when he became landlord of the Washington House, Nashua NH. He was afterwards in the same business at Tyngsboro, Mass and from 1844-1849 at the Washington House in Lowell, Mass.

Source: Flume House by Hugh C. Leighton Co, www.cardcow.com/176062

"When Mr. Taft came among the mountains to open the Flume House the entire receipts of his house for the first year were hardly equal to the salary which a competent landlord now commands, yet it was considered a fairly remunerative season. Within a decade and a half, the annual profits were wont to reach many times that sum. When the Gibbs went to the New Crawford House, in 1852, Mr. Taft and a partner purchased the Lafayette House property, and began the erection of the Profile House, of which he was principal proprietor and landlord to the time of his death. This house, built on a generous scale, was thought to be sufficiently large for the requirements of the business for years to come, yet the increasing popularity of its ideal landlord, and the growing fame of the region, required frequent enlargement, until it became one of the most extensive and best equipped establishments of its kind in the land. Over this vast hostelry, with its hundreds of guests, its varying interests, and its constant cares, Mr. Taft was the presiding genius. Every department felt his impress, but his unobtrusive manners and somewhat infirm health, led him to avoid the publicity incident to his position. He seldom came in personal contact with his guests, but those who enjoyed his intimacy found him not only the watchful landlord, but the cultivated genial gentleman.

"Mr. Taft gradually acquired a title to the vast tract of land extending from the Profile Farm in Laconia, by Bald Mountain, through the valley to and beyond the Flume House, a region that for quiet and romantic beauty cannot be surpassed by another of equal extent on the Connecticut.

"Mr. Taft had a natural aptitude for his chosen business, and his rare sagacity brought him uniform success. It was of such magnitude as to require his constant attention, and he seldom ventured to engage in enterprises not contributory to it. He was largely instrumental in constructing the narrow gauge railroad from Bethlehem Junction to the Profile House, and was its first president. To him, more than to any other person, is due the marvelous growth of the mountain business. He saw what it might become, and led the way in the development of all the adjuncts required to hasten the full tide of its success."

(SOURCE: Gazetteer of Grafton County, N.H., 1709-1886 by Hamilton Child, Syracuse, N.Y.; June 1886

See p. 9 for The Taft – The Trail That Began It All

The Taft – The Trail That Began It All

In recognition of Richard Taft's importance in developing the area, the first significant ski trail, called the Taft Trail, was cut in 1933 and in mid-February the first descent was made. "Stumps and rocks protruded from the snow, though, and … a full one-quarter of the field did not finish what was called "a death ride" and "an obstacle course. The first results appeared to be extra patients for the Dartmouth Hospital, wrote ski trailblazer Carl Shumway."

Early trail work on the Taft Trail at Cannon
(Source: New England Ski museum: The Taft – The trail that began it all)

'This fast, steep, wide, Class A race trail' set a new standard for down-mountain descents, and it was an instant hit with the Boston-area ski clubs. The state of New Hampshire decided in the late 1930's to build an aerial tramway that would serve the Taft and its sister trails. The tramway from Franconia Notch to the summit of Cannon - the first aerial tramway in the U.S. and a remarkable feat of engineering - opened in June 1938 on the north face. Tucker Brook and Coppermine were swiftly forgotten."

"The Franconia Notch region in particular, and New Hampshire in general, owes a great debt to Richard Taft, for what he accomplished in the development of the New Hampshire mountain country as a summer resort and in the introduction of city conveniences, methods and cuisine into hotel life here."

(Source: Cow Hampshire: Franconia New Hampshire Hotel Owner & Early Tourism Promoter: Richard Taft (1812-1881) by Janice Brown 8 Jun 2006); New England Ski museum online 9/7/2008)

Behind every great man…

"… Mrs Taft is a lady of unusual height, finely proportioned, with a countenance expressing the dignity, kindness and rare good sense which she possesses…. While her daughter went on this mission, Mrs. Taft entered into conversation with Edith, and among other things, said, 'I keep this house. My husband is too ill to attend to anything. There have been times when I have not had a competent cook, and I have made all the pastry that has been eaten here.'… When Edith inquired how it was possible to keep the house and beds entirely free from vermin with such a host of strangers… the model landlady replied, 'I never allow a single article to be brought to the house from the servant's quarters, and every fall everything is packed separately; I see to it myself. Once a year every carpet, except none, is taken up, and the rooms thoroughly cleaned.'… Edith did not forget that the lady who talked with her, and who supported so unostentatiously this vast weight of responsibility, had been willing to watch all night with a sick guest who had no other claim upon her attention than that he was a stranger and needed kind care…. While Edith talked with Mrs. Taft, the door of an adjoining apartment opened, and Mr. Taft entered the room. He is a very agreeable gentleman, although his sunken eyes and sallow face bear witness to his constant ill-health. Edith caught glimpses of the urbanity, generosity, and delicate reticence which render him so popular as a host and his house such a favorite tarrying place."

This may have been a novel but it reflects what has been stated about the natures of both Mr. and Mrs Taft. Richard Taft said about his wife that "she had done more than her share to establish his reputation as a hotel-keeper."

(Source: The Profile House by William N Cox, publ A F Graves 1872 pp. 201-206 Chapter XIV The Landlady; The Gazetter of Grafton Co, NH 1709-1886 – Franconia, comp. by Hamilton Child 1886)

Taft Family Association Officers

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Executive Committee: Robert Curtis, Justin Taft, Charles F. Davis Jr..

Annual dues of $8 per family are due and payable each year on or before June 1, 2006.
(Your dues are paid through the year on your mailing label.)